

# Water Lines

## SDW Hotline Report

### In This Issue

<a href="#">What's New.....</a>	<a href="#">1</a>
<a href="#">Did You Know.....</a>	<a href="#">1</a>
<a href="#">Monthly Trends.....</a>	<a href="#">2</a>
<a href="#">Frequently Asked Qs &amp; As.....</a>	<a href="#">2</a>
<a href="#">Hotline Stats.....</a>	<a href="#">4</a>
<a href="#">Appendix A.....</a>	<a href="#">6</a>

### Top Ten Topics

Topic	Questions (phone & e-mail)	Percent of Total* Questions
Tap Water Testing	155**	11
Local Drinking Water Quality	145	10
Household Wells	88	6
MCL List	80	6
Home Water Treatment Units	68	5
Lead	64	4
Other EPA	59	4
Non-EPA Environmental	48	3
Other Background	48	3
Safe Drinking Water Act	44	3

\*A total of 1,428 questions were answered by the Hotline (via telephone and e-mail) in January 2004.

\*\*Citizens who obtain their drinking water from private household wells asked 15 percent of the tap water testing questions.

Calls	E-mails	Total***
873	253	1,126

\*\*\*A single call or e-mail may generate multiple questions.

Published Monthly

See past reports at

<http://intranet.epa.gov/ow/hotline>

Safe Drinking Water Hotline: National Toll-free No.: (800) 426-4791

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Operated by Booz Allen Hamilton  
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## What's New

### New Publications:

- Water on Tap: What You Need To Know (EPA816-K-03-007, October 2003) is now available at [www.epa.gov/safewater/wot/index.html](http://www.epa.gov/safewater/wot/index.html) or by contacting the National Service Center for Environmental Publications at 1-800-490-9198.

### Calendar:

Who?	What?	Where?	When?	More Information
GWPC	UIC Conference	Houston, TX	1/20/2004 – 1/22/2004	
NDWAC	CCL Work Group	Washington, DC	1/22/2004 – 1/23/2004	
NDWAC	Water Security Working Group	Washington, DC	2/10/2004	
NDWA	CCL Work Group	Washington, DC	3/4/2004 – 3/5/2004	
ASDWA	Member Meeting	Alexandria, VA	3/17/2004 – 3/19/2004	
GWPC	Annual Policy Conference	Washington, DC	3/21/2004 – 3/23/2004	

### Did You Know?

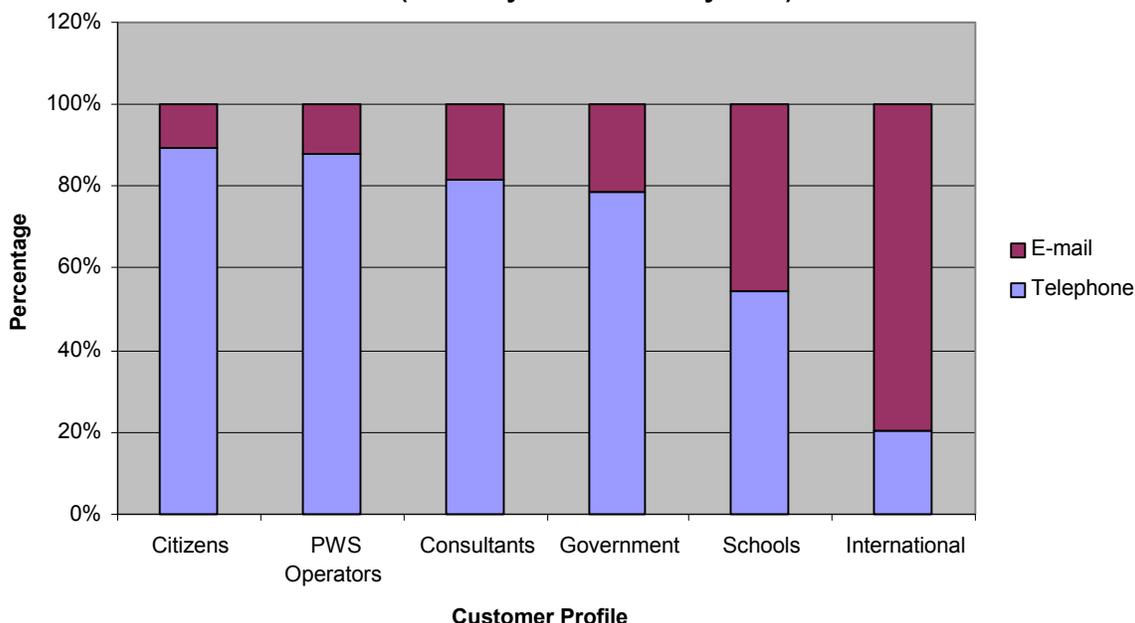
Although some MTBE water contamination comes from car exhaust, leaking storage tanks are the leading source of MTBE contamination of water.

(American Water Works Association)

## Monthly Trends

The Safe Drinking Water Hotline examined how various types of Hotline customers contacted the Hotline between February 2003 and January 2004. The chart below lists six of the most common customer profiles and provides the percentage of those customers who contacted the Hotline via e-mail and telephone. Telephone use was the predominant form of contact mode for most of the profiles; however, e-mail correspondence represented nearly half of the correspondence for customers associated with schools or universities. The international community predominantly used e-mail when contacting the Hotline.

**Breakdown of Customer Profile by Contact Mode  
(February 2003 – January 2004)**



## Frequently Asked Qs & As

*This section provides answers to frequently asked questions not necessarily represented in one of the Top Ten Topic categories.*

**Q:** After we completed the vulnerability assessment for our water system, we decided to upgrade our facility. Where can I find information regarding products designed to increase security?

**A:** EPA has developed a series of security product guides to assist water treatment plant operators and utility managers in reducing risks from, and providing protection against, possible natural disasters and intentional terrorist attacks. The guides provide information on a variety of products available to enhance physical and electronic security, such as gates, manhole locks, computer firewalls, and remote monitoring systems. The product guides are

available at [www.epa.gov/safewater/security/guide/index.html](http://www.epa.gov/safewater/security/guide/index.html).

**Q:** My water tested positive for hardness. What are the health effects associated with hard water?

**A:** Hard water is not known to cause any adverse health effects. However, relatively softer water enhances consumer acceptability. Hardness is primarily caused by the presence of calcium and magnesium in the water. There is no well-defined distinction between hard water and soft water. In general, hardness values of less than 75 mg/L as calcium carbonate (CaCO<sub>3</sub>) represent soft water, and values above 150 mg/L CaCO<sub>3</sub> represent hard water (*Enhanced Coagulation and Enhanced Precipitative Softening Guidance Manual*, EPA815-R-99-012, May 1999).

**Q:** Perchlorate is both a naturally occurring and man-made chemical, used as the primary ingredient of solid rocket propellant. Does perchlorate pose a threat to drinking water sources?

**A:** The full extent of perchlorate contamination is not known at this time, and a national primary drinking water standard has not been established for perchlorate. However, EPA, other federal agencies, states, water suppliers and industry are actively addressing perchlorate contamination through monitoring for perchlorate in drinking water and surface water. Additional information about perchlorate is available at [www.epa.gov/safewater/ccl/perchlorate/perchlorate.html](http://www.epa.gov/safewater/ccl/perchlorate/perchlorate.html).

**Q:** How much water does a person ingest daily?

**A:** The estimated average per capita ingestion of water from a public water system in the United States is 927 milliliters per person per day. Ingestion estimates are important because EPA develops risk assessments based on the ingestion of contaminated drinking water. Currently, EPA uses the standard water ingestion quantity of two liters per day for a 70-kilogram adult when developing risk assessments (*Estimated Per Capita Water Ingestion in the United States*, EPA822-R-00-008, April 2000). The report on per capita water ingestion, based on data from the United States Department of Agriculture, and more information are available at [www.epa.gov/waterscience/drinking/percapita](http://www.epa.gov/waterscience/drinking/percapita).

**Q:** Is exposure to lead contaminated drinking water from absorption through skin a health threat?

**A:** EPA does not consider exposure to lead contaminated drinking water from absorption through the skin to be a health threat. Water contains inorganic forms of lead, which are not capable of being absorbed through the skin (*Water Supply Guidance Memo; Adverse Health Effects of Lead and Copper from Avenues Other Than Ingestion*, July 1992).

**Q:** Is a public water system (PWS) required to notify customers when a boil water notice has been lifted?

**A:** EPA recommends that when microbiological contamination is resolved, a PWS should issue a follow-up notice stating that it is no longer necessary to continue boiling the water (*Final State Implementation Guidance for the Public Notification (PN) Rule*, EPA816-R-01-010, October 2001).

**Q:** What is the difference between pH and alkalinity?

**A:** Alkalinity is the capacity of water to neutralize acids. This capacity is caused by the water's content of carbonate, bicarbonate, hydroxide and occasionally borate, silicate and phosphate. Conversely, pH is an expression of the intensity of the basic or acid condition of a liquid. EPA has a suggested range of 6.5 to 8.5 for pH (called a secondary maximum contaminant level or SMCL). Furthermore, alkalinity and pH are different because water does not have to be strongly basic (high pH) to have a high alkalinity (*EPA's Drinking Water Glossary: A Dictionary of Technical and Legal Terms Related to Drinking Water*, EPA810-B-94-006, June 1994).

**Q:** I understand EPA is revising the *Manual for the Certification of Laboratories Analyzing Drinking Water* (EPA815-B-97-001, March 1997). Is it possible to get a copy of the draft version? When will the final version of the manual be available?

**A:** According to Carol Madding of EPA, the revised *Manual for the Certification of Laboratories Analyzing Drinking Water* is currently undergoing Office of General Council (OGC) review and is not being distributed at this time. EPA is anticipating publication of a final version within the first six months of 2004.

### Monthly Summary of Hotline Service

Total number of calls answered	873
Total number of e-mails received	253
Average wait time (in seconds)	0:36
Percent of calls satisfied immediately	99.9%
Percent of all calls answered in < 1 min	85%
Percent of callbacks answered in 5 days	100%
Percent of e-mails answered in 5 days	100%
Number of times callers were transferred to the WSC Wellcare Hotline	227
Number of times callers listened to recorded message about CCRs	166
Number of times callers listened to recorded message about local drinking water quality for PWS customers	178
Number of times callers listened to recorded message about tap water testing and quality for household well owners	164
Number of times callers listened to recorded message about tap water testing for PWS customers	265

### Comparison to Previous Year

	Calls	E-mails
January 2004	873	253
January 2003	1,531	289

### Top Ten Referrals

Inquiry Referred to:	Number of Referrals	Percent of Total* Referrals
1. EPA Internet	197	20
2. State PWSS	133	13
3. Local Water System	131	13
4. State Lab Certification	126	13
5. AGWT/WSC	73	7
6. NSF/WQA/UL	68	7
7. EPA Regions	37	4
8. Other Hotlines	33	3
9. Local Public Health	28	3
10. Other	26	3

\*A total of 997 referrals to other resources, agencies, and organizations were provided by the Hotline in January 2004.

### Customer Profiles

Customer	Calls	E-mails
Analytical Laboratories	18	3
Citizen - Private Well	81	41
Citizen - PWS	436	74
Consultants/Industry/Trade (DW)	62	7
Consultants/Industry/Trade (Other)	69	38
Environmental Groups	4	2
EPA	11	1
Other Federal Agency	6	5
Government, Local	5	6
Government, State	15	6
Government, Tribal	2	0
Spanish Speaking	6	0
International	6	11
Media	1	1
Medical Professional	3	1
Public Water System	73	28
Schools/University	27	29
Other	48	0
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>873</b>	<b>253</b>

### Daily Call Data

	Total Calls Answered	Average Wait Time mm:sec
2-January	27	00:11
5-January	51	00:54
6-January	37	00:31
7-January	40	00:27
8-January	42	00:26
9-January	45	00:36
12-January	52	00:19
13-January	45	00:29
14-January	31	00:22
15-January	53	00:45
16-January	31	00:47
20-January	61	00:53
21-January	31	00:52
22-January	47	00:35
23-January	45	01:20
26-January	53	00:36
27-January	52	00:22
28-January	51	00:23
29-January	45	00:32
30-January	34	00:24
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>873</b>	<b>00:36</b>

## Topic Categories

Category	Calls	E-mails
<b>Microbials/Disinfection Byproducts</b>		
Chlorine	9	5
Coliforms	32	5
Cryptosporidium	3	1
Disinfection/Disinfection Byproducts (Other)	28	4
Disinfection – Home Water	3	0
Other Microbials	3	1
Storage – Home Water	4	1
Surface Water Treatment (SWTR, ESWTR, LT1FBR)	29	3
Trihalomethane (THM)	4	0
<b>Inorganic Chemicals (IOC)/Synthetic Organic Chemicals (SOC)</b>		
Arsenic	15	7
Fluoride	5	3
Methyl- <i>tertiary</i> -butyl-ether (MTBE)	4	2
Perchlorate	3	2
Phase I, II & V	10	2
Sodium Monitoring	1	0
Sulfate	0	0
<b>Lead and Copper</b>		
Copper	9	0
Lead	58	6
Lead Contamination Control Act (LCCA)/Lead Ban	5	1
<b>Radionuclides</b>		
Radionuclides (Other)	4	4
Radionuclides (Radon)	27	7
<b>Secondary DW Regulations</b>		
Secondary DW Regulations	17	4
<b>SDWA Background/Overview</b>		
Definitions & Applicability	9	2
MCL List	65	15
Other Background	35	13
SDWA	42	2

Category	Calls	E-mails
Water on Tap	7	5
<b>Other DW Regulations</b>		
Analytical Methods (DW)	17	6
Contaminant Candidate List/ Drinking Water Priority List	5	0
Consumer Confidence Report (DW)	34	5
DW Primacy (PWS)	0	0
Operator (PWS) Certification	1	3
Other Drinking Water Security	24	12
Public Notification (PWS)	29	2
Security Planning Grants	1	1
State Revolving Fund (DW)	0	3
Unregulated Contaminant Monitoring Rule (UCMR)	19	1
<b>Other Drinking Water</b>		
Additives Program	3	1
Bottled Water	18	3
Complaints about PWS	26	15
Compliance & Enforcement (PWS)	22	8
Home Water Treatment Units	54	14
Infrastructure/Cap. Development	13	3
Local DW Quality	126	19
Tap Water Testing	142	13
Treatment/BATs (DW)	5	3
<b>Drinking Water Source Protection</b>		
Ground Water Rule	7	4
Sole Source Aquifer	0	0
Source Water/Wellhead Protection	13	7
UIC Program	6	1
<b>Out of Purview</b>		
Household Wells	55	33
Non-Environmental	13	4
Non-EPA Environmental	32	17
Other EPA (Programs)	38	21
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>1,134</b>	<b>294</b>

### EPA DISCLAIMER

Answers to questions in the Safe Drinking Water Hotline monthly report are intended to be purely informational and are based on SDWA provisions, EPA regulations, guidance, and established policy effective at the time of publication. The answers given reflect EPA staff's best judgment at the time and do not represent a final or official EPA interpretation. This report does not substitute for the applicable provisions of statutes and regulations, guidance, etc., nor is it a regulation itself. Thus, it does not impose legally-binding requirements on EPA, States, or the regulated community. An answer to a question in this report may be revised at any time to reflect EPA's revisions to existing regulations, changes in EPA's approach to interpreting its regulations or statutory authority, or for other reasons. EPA may provide a different answer to a question in this report in the future.

Also, an answer provided in this report may not apply to a particular situation based upon the circumstances. Any decisions regarding a particular case will be made based on the applicable statutes and regulations. Therefore, interested parties are free to raise questions and objections about the appropriateness of the application of an answer in this report to a particular situation, and EPA will consider whether or not the recommendations or interpretations in the answer are accurate and appropriate in that situation. The information in this report is not intended, nor can it be relied upon, to create any rights enforceable by any party in litigation with the United States.

## SAFE DRINKING WATER HOTLINE MONTHLY REPORT

January 2004

### APPENDIX A: FEDERAL REGISTER SUMMARIES

#### NOTICES

**"Notice of Availability: The Feasibility of Performing Cumulative Risk Assessments for Mixtures of Disinfection By-Products in Drinking Water"  
January 7, 2004 (69 FR 919)**

EPA announced the availability of a final report titled, "The Feasibility of Performing Cumulative Risk Assessments for Mixtures of Disinfection By-Products in Drinking Water (EPA600/R-03-051F)," which was prepared by EPA's National Center for Environmental Assessment (NCEA) of the Office of Research and Development (ORD).

**"Notice of Tentative Approval for the Public Water Supply Supervision Program Revision for the State of New Jersey"  
January 27, 2004 (69 FR 3917)**

EPA announced that New Jersey has revised the Public Water Supervision Program to adopt revisions to the Lead and Copper Rule, the Public Notification Rule, the Radionuclide Rule, the Stage 1 Disinfectants and Disinfection Byproducts Rule, the Interim Enhanced Surface Water Treatment Rule, the Filter Backwash Rule and the Long Term 1 Enhanced Surface Water Treatment Rule. If no hearing requests or comments are received by February 26, 2004, the determination will become effective.

**"Notice of a Teleconference Meeting of the National Drinking Water Advisory Council: Conference Call to Continue Discussion of the Formation of a Water Security Working Group"  
January 30, 2004 (69 FR 4514)**

EPA announced a teleconference meeting to continue discussion on formation of a Water Security Working Group of the National Drinking Water Advisory Council. The conference call will take place at 11 a.m., Eastern Time on February 10, 2004.